

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL & PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT MANUAL

Section I: Introduction

County of Catawba, NC OUR STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Catawba County government provides necessary services to its citizens with honesty and professionalism at reasonable costs. Although the range of services is diverse, the following principles guide the efforts of Catawba County government:

- Provide the least intrusive government that serves the best interest of all citizens.
- View elected and appointed officials as policymakers, and staff as implementors of policy.
- Encourage citizen participation in government and promote public trust and accountability.
- Administer a government that is competent and responsive to citizen's needs while understanding its obligation to taxpayers.
- Adhere to the community's strong work ethic, promoting high productivity with reasonable workloads.
- Foster an economic, social and physical environment that allows individual and corporate citizens to realize their potential.
- Encourage and recognize creativity, innovation and teamwork among County employees.
- Encourage administrative decision-making at the point of service.
- Administer county government with compassion and fairness.

Policy Statement

Catawba County believes in providing a work environment that promotes equal employment opportunity and provides employees opportunities to succeed. As a part of this system, the County has developed an appraisal process that establishes a means for evaluating an employee's job performance. This system is designed to (i) recognize and provide feedback on performance, (ii) provide direction to below standard performers and (iii) address unacceptable performance. Conduct is also discussed and reviewed, and goals established. Several management tools are utilized in this performance evaluation process which, collectively, establish and document work objectives, set performance expectations, provide on-going feedback, develop personal improvement and development plans and provide an overall summary of performance.

The purpose of this manual is to provide guidelines for the County's system and to provide

direction to supervisors and employees on how to accurately and consistently apply those guidelines.

Philosophy

The basic focus of the County's evaluation system is to provide a means of communication about issues concerning an employee's performance. Employees need and deserve to know how they are performing. Employees should be counseled and coached on their strengths and weaknesses and what they need to accomplish in order to enhance their ability to take advantage of employment related opportunities. Employees should be given every opportunity to succeed.

Performance and Conduct Issues

Under the County Personnel Code an employee may be subject to disciplinary action for poor performance or conduct. Certain conduct may subject an employee to discipline, including discharge, for a first offense and without an opportunity to correct the conduct. When poor conduct does not rise to this level, less severe forms of discipline may be administered and the employee coached on acceptable conduct.

Goals

The system is designed to meet the following goals:

- Provide a uniform and equitable basis for appraising performance.
- Clarify the responsibilities of a supervisor for assuring that performance goals are met.
- Support and reinforce the evaluation system by providing guidelines that, to the fullest extent possible, are fair and consistently applied to all employees and supervisors.
- To identify training and development needs.
- To provide direction to below-standard performers.

Performance Appraisal: Why

Many employees and supervisors are uncomfortable with the process of performance appraisal. However, this process is necessary in order to provide formal feedback to the employee about the level of performance, promotability, career development and training needs. Employees who are below standard performers are given formal feedback on what improvements are necessary in order to remain employed with Catawba County.

Section II: Annual Performance Appraisal Cycle

This section provides a brief overview of the process.

1. Orientation and training, including an explanation of the performance appraisal system
 - (a) Conduct job review
 - (b) Explain forms
2. Review criteria for performance and identify behaviors & skills pertinent to the position
3. Develop plan for upcoming evaluation period
 - (a) Objectives/outcomes
 - (b) Expectations
 - (c) Conditions
 - (d) Prioritize objectives

4. Developmental planning
 - (a) Analyze strengths & weaknesses
 - (b) Identify training conferences/activities to pursue
 - (c) Develop plan and establish target dates
 - (d) Record results as they occur
5. Interim performance discussions
 - (a) Discuss performance to date
 - (b) Make any adjustments necessary, keeping in mind resource availability, changes in the workplace, and other factors that affect meeting goals
 - (c) Keep a written record
6. Evaluation conference
 - (a) Establish a time & location for the conference
 - (b) Employee and supervisor should each, independently, make notes concerning the employees performance
 - (c) Supervisor should use standard appraisal forms when evaluating performance
 - (d) Meeting should be held in a quiet, private place where the participants will not be interrupted
 - (e) Discussion during the conference should include an analysis of past performance
 - (f) A plan for the next evaluation period should be developed
7. Paperwork completed
 - (a) Employee is given the opportunity to review all paperwork and to make comments
 - (b) Employee is given the opportunity to question any remarks felt to be incorrect
 - (c) The supervisor and employee sign the paperwork
 - (d) Paperwork is forwarded to Personnel Department to be filed in the personnel file
8. Disagreement
 - (a) If the employee disagrees with the evaluation, [s]he may utilize the grievance procedure to challenge same
 - (b) The employee is asked to sign the paperwork even if he/she disagrees with it, and may make a statement to that effect. The employee's signature is an acknowledgement of the evaluation, but may not indicate acceptance.

Section III: Performance Appraisal Process

This section provides details on how the process works.

1. Rating Scale: The County has a rating scale that is noted on the Annual Performance Evaluation Form. The scale is based on established minimum standards that all employees must meet, which standards utilize a grading system of (i) does not meet expectations, (ii) needs improvement, (iii) meets or (iv) exceeds expectations. See the Ratings Section of this manual for guidelines on how to apply the ratings.
2. Orientation to the system: Types of performance evaluations included under this policy are probationary, interim and annual evaluations. The following information explains

how the procedure has been established.

- (a) Supervisory training: Prior to any supervisor conducting evaluations for the first time, the supervisor must participate in training on the system and how to conduct performance evaluations.
- (b) Employee orientation: Orientation shall be provided upon assignment to a position, and shall be given by the immediate supervisor or division manager conducting the evaluation. The orientation shall include providing the employee a job description, a discussion of expectations and duties, and behaviors expected. The employee shall be given the opportunity to ask questions and encouraged to seek feedback during the evaluation process.
- (c) The Personnel Department sends out a list of regularly scheduled probationary annual evaluations by the end of the month prior to that in which the evaluation will take place. The supervisor provides notice to the employee and gives the employee any necessary forms to review. The employee and supervisor each need to make notes about anything they may want to discuss during the evaluation meeting. The supervisor also needs to review any file notes or other documents made since the employee's last performance evaluation, as well as any communications with the employee about expected performance. The supervisor should plan and conduct the session by scheduling and completing paperwork. The supervisor should be explicit when drafting paperwork and discussing issues such as quality and quantity of work, additional work responsibilities, changes that have or will affect the employee, and productivity related issues.
- (d) The session is held in a quiet, private place where and when the employee and supervisor will not be interrupted. This is very important. Conducting the session in another setting gives the impression the conference is not important, and if there are any performance improvements to be noted, it is important to have the session held in a manner that enhances the employee's dignity.
- (e) If the session becomes confrontational or emotional, it should be suspended to allow a cooling off period. It should resume after two to three days. This also gives both the supervisor and employee time to think about the conversation and prepare for the resumption of their meeting.
- (f) Evaluation sessions should conclude with a plan of work developed and agreed upon. When any rating is less than meets, that rating and the expectation needs to be addressed in the evaluation. **A CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN SHOULD BE DEVELOPED WHEN ANY PERFORMANCE FACTOR HAS NOT BEEN RATED MEETS OR EXCEEDS.** The supervisor and employee need to discuss and try to agree upon expectations, conditions and priorities. The employee needs to understand the expectations, and if needed improvements are noted, the employee must be informed of the consequences of not meeting the plan. Employees should be part of developing the plan and be an integral part of the process.

Cautionary Note: Supervisors need to play a supporting role. The employee has the responsibility of learning and improving, which is often harder than outlining the role. The support and encouragement of the supervisor is often critical to the success of the employee's performance. Supervisors need to keep in mind the dignity and esteem of the employee, and treat employees in a manner that maintains the employee's dignity.

- (g) The supervisor and employee need to establish follow up and interim review meetings. In cases where improvements are noted, this is particularly important. Supervisors are responsible for providing feedback to employees about how they are accomplishing goals. An evaluation session should not contain surprises to the employee, and providing feedback as situations occur will prevent surprises.
- (h) Encourage the employee to make and/or add any personal comments to the evaluation paperwork. Have the employee sign and date the forms. Upon completion, send the original forms to Personnel for filing in the employee's personnel file.

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS: WHEN AN EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE IN ANY AREA IS NOT RATED MEETS OR EXCEEDS, THE SUPERVISOR SHALL DEVELOP A CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN. THE PURPOSE IS TO BE SURE THERE IS UNDERSTANDING WHERE THE PERFORMANCE NEEDS IMPROVEMENT AND TO DOCUMENT SO THE INFORMATION IS COMMUNICATED WITH THE EMPLOYEE.

SUPERVISORS NEED TO CONTACT THE PERSONNEL DIRECTOR OR PERSONNEL SERVICES COORDINATOR FOR ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPING A CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN.

If the Employee Does Not Agree with the Evaluation

Ask the employee if there is anything with which he or she does not agree. If, after discussing the area in question an agreement is not reached, give the employee an opportunity to write on the paperwork what is not agreed upon and why. Provide the employee a copy of the Grievance Procedure. Advise the employee the County's grievance procedure is available for resolution of the issue. It is generally recommended that the supervisor refer the employee to Personnel for assistance with the grievance process.

If the employee refuses to sign the evaluation, ask the employee to write on the form "I refuse to sign" and to document why. The supervisor may call a witness, preferably another supervisor, asking the witness to document the employee would not sign the paperwork.

The witness and supervisor are reminded the paperwork and any conversation about the session are considered confidential.

Interim and Ongoing Review of Performance

The formal evaluation is established by policy; however, the supervisor has the responsibility of providing feedback to employees on an on-going basis. This applies to positive reinforcement and counseling when performance is not meeting expectations. The supervisor shall discuss unacceptable or sub-standard performance immediately, keeping in mind the employee's dignity by using a manner that does not embarrass the employee.

Likewise, exceptional performance should be commented on, and a special effort made to praise and recognize the employee. In either situation, the supervisor shall maintain a record of performance throughout the evaluation cycle.

Evaluating Actual Performance

The time between evaluations is the time the supervisor evaluates actual and observed performance of the employee. Objectives and expectations will be communicated to the employee and agreed upon at the beginning of the cycle.

Section IV: Standards

All full time employees will be evaluated using the established Performance Appraisal Form.

Weighted System:

Beginning with the 2002/2003 budget year the County will implement a weighted system, where the employee is reviewed on those factors most critical to the position.

Supervisors are directed to review the rating guidelines given below to consistently apply the correct rating.

How the County Defines The Ratings: Exceeds Expectations, Meets, Needs Improvement, and Does Not Meet Expectations

Another cross-reference supervisors may use in evaluating employees is how we define the rating.

The following is intended to provide an overview of the overall rating. Because the County's system is weighted, an employee may be rated, for example, does not meet expectations in one area and exceeds expectations in another. Whichever of those two areas carried the greater weight would have a greater influence on the overall performance evaluation.

EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS : The following are characteristics of the rating and intended to be used as a guide.

- Exceeds expectations criteria for quality, quantity and timeliness; requires the employee to consistently achieve results beyond that which is expected for the position.
- Expedites work activities. Does not procrastinate or cause obstacles/delays to work output or others.
- Plans work in advance, anticipates problems and takes appropriate action. Thinks beyond duties of the job. Envisions the results and anticipates impact of projects/assignments when completed.
- Consistently receives favorable, valid comments from peers and outside contacts.
- Sought out by others for their guidance and expertise.
- Seeks additional activities voluntarily to expand job knowledge and scope. Consistently demonstrates a genuine willingness to do more than is required. Exceeds standards for attendance.

MEETS EXPECTATIONS: The following are characteristics of the rating and intended to be used as a guide.

- Meets all expected criteria for quality, quantity, and timeliness of work assignments.
- Does a complete and competent job. Performance is what is expected of a qualified and experienced person in the assigned position.
- Accurately expedites work activities for normal flow of work output for self and/or others. Demonstrates talent and skills to handle new assignments within scope of position. Rarely receives valid negative comments or complaints about work performance from outside contacts.
- Meets standards for attendance. Rarely late to work. Requires only occasional supervisory direction or guidance.

*NEEDS IMPROVEMENT: The following are characteristics of the rating and intended to be used as a guide. **REMEMBER, A CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED:***

- Needs additional education, training, skills or certification to perform the job, or some part thereof, to perform at the expected level.
- Usually meets expected criteria for quality, quantity, and timeliness of work assignments. Occasionally needs prompting. Performance includes too many errors.
- Sometimes does not do a complete and/or competent job. Performance is occasionally below that which is expected of a qualified and experienced person in the assigned position.
- Work sometimes is not performed in a timely manner, thereby affecting other workplace activities and disrupting the normal flow of work for self and/or others. Sometimes does not demonstrate talent and skills to handle new assignments within scope of position. Sometimes receives valid negative comments or complaints about work performance from outside contacts.
- Occasionally late for work. Requires more than acceptable supervisory direction or guidance.

*DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS. The following are characteristics of the rating and intended to be used as a guide. **REMEMBER, A CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED:***

- Performance is less than expected of a qualified and experienced person in the assigned position.
- Performs some duties capably but requires improvement in quality, quantity and timeliness in others.
- Repeats some errors even after coaching or additional training. Frequently needs to be reminded to complete critical tasks and refocus attention.
- Receives valid complaints or negative comments about work performance from outside contacts.
- Supervisor hesitates to give new assignments/tasks within scope of position due to performance record on routine responsibilities.
- Requires frequent and close supervision. More guidance and direction required than expected for the assignment/task.
- Frequently reports to work late, leaves early and/or takes longer than authorized work breaks. Needs to be reminded about sick leave policies.

Section V: Checklist for Performance Objectives

Comments, goals and objectives must be valid and related to position.

NOTE: If it is not communicated to the employee, comments or objectives are not valid.

1. Job-related behaviors, tasks, outcomes
2. Realistic & attainable
3. Measurable & observable/verifiable
4. Controllable by the employee
5. Understandable
6. Flexible, if appropriate
7. Assessable on a regular/interim basis
8. Valid (measures what is supposed to be measured)

Section VI: Handling Special Situations

The information previously given in this manual is intended to establish general guidelines and to establish criteria for consistency in rating employees. This section of the manual focuses on specific types of employees and how to conduct an evaluation session with them.

The Employee Rated “Exceeds Expectations”

Supervisors are encouraged to keep a perspective on the employee's total performance. If a supervisor has an employee who is truly exceptional, the supervisor does not have to feel like he/she must find something to indicate needs improvement. If minor problems are noted or if the supervisor is perceived as "nit picking" it may be detrimental to the employee. Frequently the exceptional employee will be aware of weaknesses and will openly discuss them with the supervisor, and in this case the supervisor needs to be supportive. Indeed the supervisor of the exceptional employee needs to encourage the employee and provide opportunities for increased responsibility and promotional opportunities.

The Employee Rated “Meets Expectations”

It is anticipated that most employees will fall into this category. These are employees who are at work, do their job, and are vital to the County. Generally, there are some standards that the employee excels at and some that need some improvement. The evaluation discussion should focus on the strong and weak areas. By discussing the areas where the employee is “very good” or “excellent,” the supervisor will encourage the employee to continue to develop. In discussing the weak areas and developing a plan for improvement, the supervisor will encourage the employee to bring weaker areas to a higher level.

The Employee Rated “Does Not Meet Expectations” or “Needs Improvement”

It is much more difficult to conduct an evaluation session with an employee whose job performance needs improvement or is unacceptable. Supervisors need to remember that not holding discussions about problems will not solve any problems. Not discussing the substandard or unacceptable performance may reinforce the behavior, especially if the employee is not aware of the problem. Problems need to be discussed calmly and frankly.

The Painfully Shy or Unresponsive Employee

Some employees will be unresponsive or less demonstrative than others. This may simply be the result of a quiet or timid nature. Therefore a supervisor has to be more careful in setting the tone of the session and lead into discussions carefully. The supervisor needs to remember not to ask

yes-no questions in these situations. More appropriate questions include:

- What have you liked best about your job?
- What problems have you had on the job?

The Emotional Employee

Some employees may naturally tend to be emotional while others may be involved in a situation (either personal or work-related) causing the employee to be emotional. The supervisor needs to be aware of this and needs to consider such circumstances when working with the employee. As the session progresses, the supervisor should try to determine what (if anything) can be done to identify the cause of the emotion and deal with it accordingly.

The supervisor is advised not to respond to such emotions with emotion. Arguing with the employee will only create disaster. **REMEMBER** -- The County provides an Employee Assistance Program for employees and their immediate family. A supervisor may utilize this option in working with an employee. Please contact Personnel if you need assistance.